

The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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This is a summary of a Paper prepared for the International Congress of the World Union of Freethinkers to be held at the Free University of Brussels, September 4th-8th. Dr. Chisholm was the first Director of the World Health Organisation, a former Director of the Canadian Army Health Service with the rank of Major-General.

IN THE WORLD as it has become recently, with conditions of survival quite different from those of any previous time, it is of greatest importance that mankind should be able to think freely and independently of the beliefs, convictions, attitudes, loyalties or faiths of parents or ancestors. None of them had any

concept of the world as it is now. National recourse to force was for them still a possible way of gaining political ends. Now ultimate force, the H-bomb, is suicidal, as destructive to the aggressors as to the attacked. Much new thinking has to be done; but it cannot be done effectively by people in whom early learned faiths, absolute unchangeable beliefs still are held to be followed.

It is not possible effectively to understand and deal with any of the world's great problems today from within any one set of cultural or religious certainties. Freedom to think anything about anything, experimental thinking without feelings of disloyalty or guilt is essential to any effective approach to new problems. Only Freethinkers can be counted on to find solutions of world problems which will be to the general good of the human race.

As we explore in these areas of experience beyond our own culture we find symptoms of deep anxiety, or fear, apparent in a large number of people. These derive from feelings of guilt or sin, from inferiority or insecurity, and from other tensions with the personality. Protectors, e.g., gods, spirits, saints, etc., and enemies, i.e., devils, are manufactured, which are to be dealt with only by magic and ritual. This morbid atmosphere is not for the good of the human race; it does however contribute handsomely to the prestige and the power of the dominant few.

Guiding the Child

A very significant condition, apparently essential to the imposing of a load of anxiety, is that it must be done in childhood by the authority of the parents or substitute parents. It is not done directly; most parents seem unaware of what they are doing to their children in giving them an introduction to concepts of sin and supernatural beings, often adding prejudices and faiths which defy intelligence and paralyse it. Many parents even arrange to have their small children taught things in which they themselves have no longer any belief.

The tendency to believe independently of evidence, or even in defiance of it, once encouraged in a child under trusted guidance of it, once encouraged in a child under trusted authority, with a conviction of sin and taboo, can be cured only slowly and with difficulty; usually only partially. Hence we tend to believe in the religion of the family, in the constitution of our country, in our system

of justice; even our ways of doing business will appear superior to those of other people, even though we have not studied other people's ways at all. This applies to the cut of our clothes, to haircuts, to accents and other such superficialities. Whoever dare question early inculcated beliefs is called a heretic, an iconoclast or whatever term appeals to the prejudices of the time and place. The unafraid, the unregimented, must be suppressed; and the suppression is done by parents, by teachers, by Church and by the States.

Afraid to Think

So we produce in each generation, masses taught to believe without question and afraid to think. Reasoning people have recognised the situation,

but have thought that time was on their side and that with increasing knowledge the ancient obstructive faiths would die out. They could not foresee the appalling increase in man's destructive power in the past fifteen years, nor the dreadful load of guilt and anxiety weighing down many millions of people, which may drive them away from reason and back into the false certainties of magic and religion; that way lies racial suicide.

If we look, as though we were first coming into this world, at all the religious faiths, which, if any, would we choose? The choice is wide. What should we use as criterion for the selection? Social value; amazing miracles; comfort for one's self; promise of delights and rewards after death; ritual identification with some vague power, giving a sense of superiority over others; freedom from a fear of torment that awaits the unsaved? And with these could we accept feast and fast days; circumcision; food and drink taboos; confessions; pilgrimages; and the many other duties of the "faithful?"

Minds under Control

The only common thing in all these figments of the imagination is irrationality, and, please note, their value to some person or persons for controlling the masses.

Nevertheless while many frightened people scurry back to orthodoxy and obedience, there are others, perhaps no less frightened, who react rationally and try their utmost to divest themselves of the crippling faiths they learned in infancy. They realise that the children must not be exposed to exclusive faiths which label all doubt as sin or heresy. Protect the children from any certainty of "rightness" in any direction, hence "wrongness" in others, and they will be more likely to react with reason to the dreadful problems the coming generation must meet. Give them this protection and there should be no objection to anyone crying his belief or disbelief from the housetops of radio and television. No parent should feel justified in teaching a child some belief as true, simply because of the accident of time and birth.

The Hope

Fortunately there are many and increasing numbers of heretics throughout the world today. Many fight lone battles; some are on their way to fearless living. They are concerned in freeing man from his anchors in the old

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

Freethinking Today

By Dr. G. BROCK CHISHOLM

absolutes and in helping towards a rational, free and satisfying existence. These are the Freethinkers; secularists, rationalists, humanists or whatever they choose to call themselves.

Are we ourselves free enough to do the job which needs to be done? Can we combine in sufficient strength? Or are we too tied by loyalties of patriotism or of personal property? Can we free the children so that they can attain the maturity appropriate to the changed and changing world: a maturity which, perhaps, is beyond our powers to reach?

Chosen Question

By G. H. TAYLOR

OUR VALUED veteran supporter Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe writes: "Thanks for your answer in *To Correspondents* in which you say: 'It is the capacity for memory which is heritable, not its contents. Modern genetical knowledge rules out an absurdity such as being born with memories of an ancestral life.' But contents of memories inborn have to be accounted for, especially those of prodigies and others abnormally gifted, *without tuition*. Does modern genetical knowledge explain these? What has it to say concerning Instinct and Intuition, untaught? Such mental attributes indicate and imply Thought and Intelligence, based upon contents of memory, do they not?"

They do not. Such behaviour has nothing to do with intelligence. It is to be found in low organisms, such as the earthworm, where no intelligence exists. Psychological terms are much less hazy than they used to be: intelligent behaviour is that in which prospective reference plays a determining part: this cuts out such low forms of life from our category. Instinctive behaviour is purely retrospective and, of course, inherited. This is not to say that in human beings and some higher animals it may not be overlaid with intelligent reasoning, but this is an evolutionary addition and not its biological source. Basically there is no Why or Wherefore about instinctive behaviour, but only a blind drive which has had survival value in the species and has therefore become heritable.

There is no need for Mr. Ratcliffe to go to some modern technical work on the subject, for McCabe has some most valuable chapters on it in his popular *Riddle of the Universe Today*, in which he writes:

Psychologists are bringing to light the mechanism of what used to be called "instincts" (p. 70). "Instincts" of the simpler sort are now easily interpreted and the more elaborate actions of, for instance, the higher insects are being slowly conquered and shown to depend upon a complex mechanism of tropisms, enzymes, hormones and automatic nerve-activity which it took something like a thousand years to develop. It is now fairly certain that no insects have even a dull form of consciousness, much less intelligence. But the entire mechanism and behaviour of the living body are being steadily interpreted in all sections on mechanical or physico-chemical lines (p. 89).

I doubt if any practising biologist would, save for linguistic shorthand, use the term "instinct" as a stable premise, unless perhaps when lecturing to laymen. Instead, he would be speaking of measurable substances like hormones and enzymes, and measurable cycles of behaviour like tropisms, or of mneme ("memory-stuff").

Instinct is no more than a convenient label, now losing its convenience, which was seized on by Vitalists as something existing in its own right and pointing to the operation of a Vital Principle.

We are not born, as Mr. Ratcliffe seems to think, with

We are assembled here in Congress in the Free University of Brussels to salute the memory of a great educationist; to enquire into the situation of Freethinking in the schools of the world, and to impress on all the urgent need to work for as complete an emancipation of the human mind as is possible if humanity is to survive yet another hundred years. Speaking for the thinking people of the Americas, I wish this congress great success; it can have no nobler aim for the ultimate happiness and welfare of mankind.

memory contents, but with mnemonic potential, differing from one person to the next, and inherited as surely as we inherit the characteristics of our bodies. As we proceed through life we gather memory-contents: events and facts which have made a repeatable track on our mnemonic make-up. These we acquire; we do not inherit them. Mr. Ratcliffe will remember speaking in Hyde Park when he was younger, but such memory-contents are not transmissible through the germ plasm.

Some people *claim* to remember what happened to them in a "previous life," but such people are usually living humdrum lives and wish to raise themselves out of the common rut by laying claim to something exciting and spectacular, something to mark them off from their neighbours who are mere nobodies.

The term "intuition" has done more harm than good in discussion. Sometimes it is no more than a haphazard guess which come off and is therefore remembered and boasted about. At other times it refers to a true deduction which was so fast that the subject has forgotten the elements which made it. In this case it is covered by the scientific term Insight, first used by Kohler (*Einsicht*). The term is exactly right: it is a "seeing-into" a problem, resulting in thought-pictures which rearrange the elements so as to achieve a solution. It can be performed by apes under experimental conditions, and by dogs from observation. One would expect horses, elephants and perhaps other high mammals to be capable, in some degree, of insight.

Such ideas as reincarnation and recurring life-cycles are, one may say, today more suitable for women's magazines and mass-circulation newspapers than for scientific discussion.

UNDECIDED PROTESTANTS

In a research project for my Master's Degree, I asked 32 questions of 350 students (about 10 per cent of the student body of my American University) consisting of 93 Roman Catholics, 216 Protestants, 27 Deists, and 14 Agnostics. Perhaps one of the most interesting things to be observed in the results is the large percentage of Protestants, in many cases, who were "undecided." This, I feel, offers a most interesting challenge to the Freethought movement. If any validity can be assumed outside this university environment—and I would certainly think some could be—the topics to be emphasised in the "education" of the religious liberals would be those in which they do not have definite opinions. A large undecided response was indicated on the following: "There were times when Jesus felt inclined to do wrong or selfish things"; "Jesus came back, physically, after his death, to eat, talk, and walk with his friends"; "The miracles recorded in the Bible really happened and were truly miraculous, that is, they occurred because a Supreme Being set aside the Natural Laws"; "The miracles of the Bible could be explained as 'ordinary' events, if all the facts were known"; "A place called 'Hell' is the fate of a person who has led an evil life"; and "Man does not have spiritual immortality."

E. BERGMANN (U.S.A.)

Psycho-analysis of Joseph's Dream

By DR. VITALI NEGRI (U.S.A.)

In 1905, Sigmund Freud, after a thorough investigation into the mechanism of dreams, announced to the world that every dream represents the fulfilment of a wish. Stated simply, this means that every scene, thought, word, or act expressed by the mind during a dream is the result of a desire which first entered the mind during the waking state—a desire which sought either to attain something, to run away from something, to eliminate something, or to solve something.

The fact that the individual in the waking state is not able to achieve a satisfactory fulfilment of his desire, is sufficient reason for the denied impulse to seek expression via the pathway of dreams at a time when the mind, operating at a sub-conscious level (below the threshold of wakefulness) is unable to exercise its usual reasoning or restrictive and deliberative abilities.

We may gather, therefore, that when we dream, we are supplying ourselves, in our dream, with something which we could not attain to or resolve in actual life. This is not always clear in the dream itself because the images or concepts expressed in the dream are often symbolized—altered in appearance from the original person, thing, place, or idea—to the extent that they are not recognizable without the benefit of considerable psychoanalytic effort. Some "plain" dreams, on the other hand, which are without symbolization are quite simple to interpret, provided we know certain pertinent facts about the life and problems of the dreamer.

Such a dream had Joseph, the carpenter, who was engaged to Mary who, according to the Bible, was chosen by God to bear His Son, whose name would be Jesus.

Now let us review the situation. Matthew 1, v. 18, tells us: ". . . the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: when as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost."

Can one not imagine the consternation of Joseph as he looked upon the angelic face of his beloved and tried to reconcile himself with the fact that she had already belonged to another? How could any woman, despoiled before marriage, be considered acceptable, and more particularly so in that era among the Hebrews, or among any of the semi-oriental or oriental groups which have always maintained a rigid and emphatic insistence upon the premarital purity and virginity of their women?

What could Joseph do? The Bible informs us, Matthew 1, v. 19 and 20:

"Then Joseph, her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.

"But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost."

Is such a dream not simple to understand and interpret?

According to the information given us, Joseph "being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily." Psychoanalytically, this gives us some indication of the goodness of Joseph's character as well as his personal feelings towards Mary. Very few men of that day, or even of modern times, would take kindly to the news that the woman he was to marry was already pregnant when he, himself, had not touched

her, and very few would forfeit the opportunity to obtain some sort of revenge. Yet Joseph was not willing to make her a public example. He wished to spare her; to save her from public disgrace and humiliation. Yet, how to do this without hurting his own dignity? Was not his own manhood, his own pride, in jeopardy? Whatever had happened, whether it be Mary's fault or not, such an affront could not be ignored, for even if Joseph could, by effort, reconcile his own feelings, his position in the eyes of the world would remain unbearable.

Obviously Joseph loved Mary. He desired, above everything, to find a solution that would vindicate Mary's condition and justify his own readiness to take her as his wife.

And "while he thought on these things," lo! he had a dream. And what did his dream tell him? It mirrored his wish and solved his problem, not only by restoring Mary to her former state of purity but by raising her additionally to the highest, most exalted rank possible to a mere mortal—she became in Joseph's eyes, a sacred vessel honoured by God to give birth to His only begotten Son.

In the face of this stupendous revelation spoken, as it were, from the mouth of "the angel of the Lord," what mortal indeed, could cast aspersions upon Joseph's willingness to wed Mary or to welcome the birth of the baby to be called Jesus?

Thus, out of the turmoil of Joseph's anguish and the simplicity of his nature which demanded nothing of reason and everything from superstitious gullibility, he dreamed his own solution by which a command from the highest Source pronounced Mary's innocence, extended a sacred significance to the union of Joseph and Mary, and made it possible for his pride and integrity as a man to remain intact. In fact, so great was Joseph's wish to possess Mary and yet not suffer injury to his pride and dignity, that he achieved a "miracle" whose impact has literally rocked the earth for almost two thousand years.

So much for the general context of Joseph's dream. Now let us examine it more minutely.

Thus we become aware that it was Joseph's will, not God's, that was fulfilled in Joseph's dream. The recognition of a human father for Mary's child was unthinkable as it could never eradicate either Joseph's or Mary's shame. Only God would have the priority to impregnate this woman without the necessity of causing her to be publicly stoned to death for misconduct. Only God's fatherhood of Jesus could permit Joseph to accept the child into his arms, and allow him to live honourably with Mary.

It is of considerable interest to realize that after Jesus' birth neither Joseph, Mary nor all Christendom, found it incongruous for Mary, the supposed Bride of God and Mother of His Only Son, to relinquish this exalted role for the secondary and certainly less pretentious one of being the wife of Joseph, the carpenter, and of conceiving and bearing Joseph's children—the brothers and sisters of Jesus—by the same physical processes as those utilized by the rest of "sinning" humanity.

(To be concluded)

—NEXT WEEK—

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND AND DIVORCE

By F. A. RIDLEY

This Believing World

Needless to say, some disgruntled believer, not at all liking Miss Jenkins's reference in *News Chronicle* to nuns licking the dust of the shoes of other nuns in the film "The Nun's Story," claims that this is because of its "Western context." In the East it is "a sign of respect." The writer has actually seen it done to Gandhi—as if that proved anything. The truth is of course that in the East or the West to grovel in this way, whether to Gandhi or to Jesus Christ, is revolting to human dignity. It is one of our counts against any religion that practises it.

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Another gentleman who is disgruntled, is the Rev. R. Cheadle, the Vicar of St. Luke's, Wellington. He bemoans the fact that "the number of children in the Sunday school is too small to auger well for the church," meaning no doubt his own church. But, few Sunday scholars all over the country can auger badly also for the Church or Churches. Mr. Cheadle is "appalled" at the way some children come to church on their own "while their parents are elsewhere." So the rot appears to have struck both the children and their parents.

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And still more of the unlucky clergy are going to be disgruntled. In Hampstead, fifty houses are occupied by parsons and priests of the three Churches—the Church of England, the Roman Church, and the Free Churches, and they want their rates reduced. The hard-hearted Hampstead Council has refused, and the clergy now will have to pay up like everybody else. But exactly why any man of God should want his rates reduced eludes us. Will any of them enlighten us?

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A Theosophist, Mr. G. W. Barratt, has been airing his views on "Karma" (which roughly means "the law of retribution") in *Psychic News*, and has discovered that Socrates "was essentially a medium," and also had "an intuitive appreciation of Karmic law." It is "essentially" amusing to see how these believers in the supernatural piffle of Theosophy love to rope in great men as "believers" without a particle of evidence. For Socrates, Karma, we are told, "needed no proof," and this is true for all believers in such fantastic and utterly absurd theories.

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That is why Theosophy has made no headway except in a very small circle. To believe, for example, that "adepts" in Tibet can "waft" messages to "initiates" in England, shows even more hopeless credulity that we get from Fundamentalists or Jehovah's Witnesses—and these appear to be masters in the art of believing anything whatever no matter how silly.

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By the way, it is also interesting to note that Mr. Barratt is quite certain that "existing ape forms are the Karma of human bestiality in past cycles." In other words, Theosophists believe that "the apes have come from man not the reverse"—a belief so stupid that we have no intention of combating it. The theory of Evolution has not only annihilated all supernatural religions, but also the mixture of Buddhism and bosh which forms the basis of Theosophy. No wonder that Theosophists lose their tempers when dealing with Darwin.

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It is quite a mistake to imagine that quarrels can only be found in "industrial" disputes, or between the various Churches. They are there in Spiritualist circles also—

spirits being quite as helpless in these things as trade unionists and employers, to say nothing of priests. There is and has been for some time a row going on between the members of the National Federation of Spiritual Healers, and the Spiritualists National Union. "Persistent and violent attacks" have been made "on our Federation, its officers and members," and "there is no good purpose in seeking further negotiations" are phrases which have a familiar ring, and prove that there is something wrong somewhere. Perhaps a little ectoplasm, a few apports and materialisations, with some infallible cures of incurable ailments will put things right. Or some stern reproofs from D. D. Home, Mrs. Piper, and Sir William Crookes who are all alive in Summerland may do the trick of reconciling the warring sects.

Canvassing for Humanism

MR. MARK LILLINGSTON of Magdalene College, Cambridge, devoted two weeks of his Summer vacation to door-to-door canvassing in Basildon New Town, Essex, and the holding of two public meetings, as a result of which, the Basildon Humanist Group and Basildon Young Humanists have been formed. The former will hold regular monthly discussion meetings in the house of the Secretary, Mr. A. Sykes, 19 Theydon Crescent, Basildon; the Young Humanists hope to run fortnightly meetings.

Mr. Lillingston visited 735 houses and, of the people interviewed, about 500 were believers in God, about 160 were non-believers, and 75 were doubtful. 800 houses were leafleted, and free literature from the Ethical Union, National Secular Society and Rationalist Press Association was given to anyone interested, while over 100 booklets from these organisations were sold. This may prove the most important part of the work, says Mr. Lillingston, since many people who haven't time to come to meetings may well read a short booklet. In addition, several NSS and RPA books were lent for periods of from seven to ten days. This, too, was much appreciated by those who couldn't afford to buy the books. Other books will form the basis of a library for the new Humanist groups.

Among the notes made by Mr. Lillingston are: "A lot of people (in fact, practically everybody) had never heard the word humanism, and there are potentially a lot of supporters, since the Churches don't yet have a complete hold, Basildon being a new town." "It is to be hoped that the new Group will make its impact felt by writing to the press frequently, seeking debates with Christians, and showing an example to the town." "It will almost be necessary to have some systematic canvassing of this kind, if the Humanist movement is ever to make an impact in the country. It is to be hoped that the Ethical Union, National Secular Society and Rationalist Press Association will co-operate to bring this about."

The Churches may not be very active, but Jehovah's Witnesses are. They are a terrible nuisance says Mr. Lillingston, "and I was confused with them in many cases." Indeed, "one of the difficulties was that far too many people go round knocking on doors in a new town, where most workers work long hours to meet the cost of living and have little time to spare to read and attend meetings."

However, Mr. Lillingston has done some very valuable work, and we are glad to have helped him by supplying literature. He tell us it was very useful and his job would have been "much more difficult without it."

Mr. Lillingston is a member of the North London Branch of the National Secular Society.

THE FREETHINKER

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F. A. HORNIBROOK, COLIN MCCALL and G. H. TAYLOR.

All articles and correspondence should be addressed to THE EDITOR at the above address and not to individuals.

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Details of membership of the National Secular Society may be obtained from the General Secretary, 41 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1. Members and visitors are welcome during normal office hours.

Inquiries regarding Secular Funeral Services should also be made to the General Secretary, N.S.S.

ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENTS

S. CHANCELLOR. For Biblical contradictions and other absurdities see our *Bible Handbook*, 5s. inclusive.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (rear of Morley Street Car Park).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Messrs. CORINA and DAY.

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (The Mound).—Every Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN, MURRAY and SLEMEN.

London (Finsbury Square, E.C.2).—Every Wednesday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY and C. MCCALL.

London (Marble Arch).—Meetings every Saturday from 6 p.m. and every Sunday from 5 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER, C. E. WOOD and D. TRIBE.

London (Tower Hill).—Every Thursday, 12—2 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER and L. EBURY.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: G. WOODCOCK. Sunday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, MILLS and WOOD.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Wednesdays, 1 p.m.; Sundays, 7.30 p.m.: Various speakers.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: Messrs. L. EBURY and A. ARTHUR.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY. Sunday, 6.30 p.m.

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Midland Institute Cinema, Paradise Street).—Sunday, August 16th, 6.45 p.m.: IVAN GEFFEN, "Nuclear Disarmament."

Notes and News

ON Tuesday, July 28th, Leicester Secular Society presented a cheque for £85 to the Leicester and Leicestershire Spastics Society, the proceeds of a dance held on June 6th. Mr. G. A. Kirk officiated, and Councillor Edward Marston presented the cheque. Mr. G. Towe, Treasurer of the Spastics Society, thanking the Leicester Secularists for their generous gift, said that on running a centre for handicapped children it was no use depending on "Christian principles." Hard facts had to be faced, and it was faith in one another which had made the centre a success. It owed nothing to local or national authorities or religious groups, which were only concerned with their own pet charities. All readers will join us in congratulating the Leicester Secular Society on its splendid effort for a very worthy cause.

A GOOD DEAL of publicity was given, in America, to Miss Sue Ingersoll's revolt against the deplorable threat by Roman Catholic Archbishop Byrne of Albuquerque that, if she paraded in a bathing costume in the "Miss

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged £249 2s. 5d.; H. W. Day, 5s.; Anon., 3s.; N. Cluett, 2s. 6d.; T. Roberts, 5s.; A. T. Browne, £1 10s.; M. Byrn, £1 5s.—Total to date. August 7th, 1959, £252 12s. 11d.

Universe" contest, he would deny the sacraments to both her and her mother for "an indefinite period of time" (her father left the Roman Church as a young man). Miss Ingersoll, New Mexico's entrant for the contest (and, as far as we know, no relation of the great Colonel) declared her intention of going through with it, in defiance of the Archbishop, and said she hoped thereby to "dispel the false, absurd and dangerous notion that Catholics cannot speak for themselves." She even prepared (with assistance) a statement on the charismatic and canonical aspects of Catholicism. She only criticised the Archbishop "with deep respect, as one friend would another," she said. But she refused to be "pushed around." It is a pity that Miss Ingersoll decided to withdraw at the last moment, though she said she was not giving in to the Archbishop, it was because the contest officials had held her "virtually a prisoner." The title, by the way, was won by Miss Akiko Kojima of Japan who, though from a Shinto family says (*Time*, 3/8/58) she has no religion herself.

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The New Yorker devotes a regular column described as a "fever chart of the planet Earth, showing Man's ups and downs in contaminating the air, the sea, and the soil." July 11th issue informed us, among other things, that "Nearly eighty-five hundred steel drums containing low-level atomic wastes have been dumped in the Atlantic since 1951"; that "a sharp increase in the radioactivity of water in the streams and rivers of Illinois occurred" in mid-April; and that "The retinas of the eyes of experimental rabbits were burned by two high-altitude H-bomb explosions over the Pacific Ocean last summer. The rabbits were more than three hundred miles away and did not blink in time."

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WE HAVE no particular sympathy for forgers, but Judge Thomas Caro seems to have been rather hard on a couple, Mr. and Mrs. Harold J. Bevel, at a Tampa, Florida court. He released them "on condition that they go to church every Sunday for the next ten years" (*Daily Express*, 29/7/59), perhaps to boost still further the church-attendance figures in the U.S.A.

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WE SEND our best wishes to Miss Willa June Jules, daughter of Mr. John T. Jules of the Fyzabad (Trinidad) Branch of the National Secular Society, on the occasion of her marriage to Mr. Patrick V. Aghaduino, a medical student of Nigeria. The wedding will take on Saturday, August 15th, in Glasgow, and the NSS will be represented by Glasgow Secretary, Mr. J. Barrowman.

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THE *Daily Worker* (21/7/59) contained a photograph of a demonstration in Lyons in defence of the lay State schools and in protest against Government plans to give subsidies to Roman Catholic schools. It was one of many demonstrations throughout France and, as the *Worker* said, it embraced wide sections of the people, as could be seen from the placards bearing the names of their organisations. Among those clearly visible was that of the French Freethinkers.

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MR. DAVE SHIPPER would like his correspondents to note his change of address. It is now 95 Mayflower Avenue, Llanishen, Cardiff, South Wales.

“Are the Gospels Really True?”—2

By H. CUTNER

AS THERE is no canonical account of the “lost” years of Jesus, those between twelve and thirty, dozens of theories have been put forward, the most popular these days being that he was staying with the Essene community imbibing their doctrines before going out into the wicked world of the Jews, and “doing good.” The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has made this very popular, but it is quite a mistake to imagine that it is something new.

That the first Christians came from the Essenes was the view of Eusebius as far back as 340 A.D., and it was the view of Robert Taylor—thus incurring the wrath of his very unpleasant Christian opponent, the Rev. J. Pye Smith, who completely lost his temper about it. Pye Smith felt, as no doubt many Christians feel these days, that if we give the Essenes the credit for so much of the wonderful and marvellous teachings of Jesus which are always considered too original and personal to have been taught by anybody else, what becomes of the absolute “uniqueness” of “our Lord?” Does it fade away like a breath of summer wind?

The discussion as to whether the Gospels are merely a re-written version of Essene teaching is, in the light of the Dead Sea Scrolls, still going on; and it certainly will not cease in our generation. But it may as well be understood that there is not the slightest doubt in “occult” circles that Jesus was an Essene. In that Rosicrucian masterpiece, *The Mystical Life of Jesus* by H. Spencer Lewis, published in 1929, the author commences with a chapter on “The Mystery of the Essene,” for in his view,

before one can properly understand and appreciate the history and real story of the birth and life work of the Master Jesus, one must have an understanding of the ancient organisations and schools which contributed to the preparation for His coming. Within the last hundred years, a great many notations in sacred literature have been discovered relating to the Essene Brotherhood and the activities of this organisation in Palestine just prior to and during the lifetime of the Master Jesus . . . it has caused one question to be asked by thousands of students of mystical literature: “Why has the history or story of the Essenes been withheld from general knowledge?”

Of course, according to Dr. Lewis, the Rosicrucian fraternity has *always* known about the Essenes and the part they played in shaping the doctrines, mystical or otherwise, of Jesus for his Great Mission; so in this book, he draws aside the “veil” a little, and allows the general public to see what is behind “the Mysteries” of Christianity, and of course, of Jesus.

And naturally the first thing to show was that the Essenes were not Jews but pure Aryans so that Jesus was not a Jew—a fact which will disappoint and disconcert many Jews who are in general tickled to death to see Christians worshipping a Jew as a God.

Dr. Lewis claims that his “discoveries” relating to Jesus come from “the Rosicrucian archives” which embrace,

the records of the Essenes, the Nazarenes, the Nazarites, as well as the complete records of the Great Brotherhood in Tibet, India, and Egypt (which) have always been sources of knowledge for the worthy inquirer into the history of all Avatars, and especially into the history of Jesus.

It is necessary to make these points because, since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Essenes have been “in the news”—as if this was for the first time. The Essenes have always been “news,” and in spite of the Rosicrucian “records,” we know very little about them

except what Philo and Josephus told us in the first century of our era.

But for people like Mr. Geoffrey Ashe, writing in the *Sunday Express*, on the problem of the truth of the Gospels, the “mystery” of the Essenes only came in with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. These, “announced” the scholars, “were the Essene scriptures” and

they spoke of a Son of God and a Martyred Teacher of Righteousness (and) they foreshadowed other Christian ideas such as a sacred communion . . .

though, “further researches have disposed of most of this, and the Essene explanation of Jesus’s lost years remains only an interesting guess.” I should advise Mr. Ashe to read Dr. Lewis’s “Life” of Jesus. He would find, unless he believed all the Rosicrucian “Records,” that everything pertaining to Jesus is nothing but “entertaining Guesses.” There is not a scrap of contemporary evidence anywhere about Jesus, while nearly everything written about him later—at least a century later and more probably 150 years after his supposed death—is based on “miracles.”

Mr. Ashe believes, I am sure, in nearly all the miracles. He goes through Palestine and Galilee and finds them corroborating the Gospels “topographically;” therefore “miracles” must have happened. And he throws out a challenge—you say “the story was invented. All right! But how?” This way of “passing the buck” is quite intriguing. Why should I or any unbeliever explain how any story in the Bible or the *Arabian Nights* was invented? If you say these stories are true, then it is *you*, Mr. Ashe, who must prove by evidence that they happened. If you insist, for example, that the story of Jesus being carried about by a Devil is literally true because I can’t explain how it was “invented,” then I have a right to ask you who invented Aladdin’s Wonderful Lamp? Who invented the story of the genie of his Lamp wafting Aladdin through the air just as Jesus was wafted through the air by a Devil? When it comes to this kind of invention, what is the exact difference between a writer in the New Testament and a writer in the *Arabian Nights*?

Of course, Mr. Ashe doesn’t like the New Testament Devil miracles. He calls them “of the cheap magical type,” but does not explain why they are not true or why they were invented. He wants us to stand by “the miracles of healing and mercy.” *They* must be true. They were performed by Jesus and were exactly the kind of miracles we expect from a God, “our Lord.” And how do we know they really happened? They are detailed in the Gospels, and the Gospels must be true because they tell us of Jesus. You can’t beat a logical circle in argument.

However, Mr. Ashe does tell us that the difference between Jesus and other “wonder workers” is that he did not “vanish when the Romans arrested him.” Some of us who are not quite such believers as Mr. Ashe were taught that God deliberately sent his Son to die for us sinners in order to save us—how then could he possibly have vanished when arrested? God sent him—or himself—to die for us is sound Christian teaching. Was that “invented” or not?

Mr. Ashe also tells us that we must “face” it, but the words of Jesus “often sound like the words of a mad-man,” though “he was not mad.” There have been books written to show that if the Gospels really and truly report the words of Jesus, then he *must* have been mad. The famous work of Dr. Binet-Sanglé, *La Folie de Jesus*, is

quite unanswerable on this score. It is a pity that it is not better known.

And finally, Mr. Ashe concludes with

If the Gospels are fiction, then we have to picture four unequalled imaginative geniuses springing up together in the same area within a few years of each other. This, I cannot do.

So what? Does this inability of Mr. Ashe picturing something—which in any case is unmitigated nonsense—prove

that his "1959 look at the Miracles" substantiates them?

The "four unequalled imaginative geniuses" all writing together comes to us from him and from nobody else. There is not a scrap of evidence for the childish statement. It is not just mere wishful thinking—it is just incredible nonsense.

As are his naive attempts to prove that the Gospels are really true.

The Incredible Father Divine

By C. H. HAMMERSLEY

FATHER DIVINE is a smart operator! Property under his control in New York, Philadelphia and Newark U.S.A., is worth over six million dollars. This in itself is no mean achievement in a man who started with nothing, but when one discovers that Father has never paid one cent in income tax one cannot help but appreciate just how smart he has been. He has evaded the tax law up to now by insisting that he owns nothing, not even his clothes, and yet without a penny in his pocket he enjoys every luxury that money can buy, all provided gratis by his worshipping followers.

"Father" was born around 1880 (as far as we can tell) on a rice plantation on the Savannah river, his name then being George Baker, and his parents share croppers (tenants who paid their rent in kind, e.g., in rice). The first reliable information on George Baker starts in 1899, when he was living in Baltimore, working around the white district, for 50 cents a week, teaching at a Sunday school, and assistant preacher at a coloured folks' Baptist church. There he met a man called Samuel Morris, who was convinced that he (Morris) was God, from a text in 1, Corinthians ("Know ye not that ye are the temple of the Holy Spirit, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth within you"). Morris would suddenly stop in the middle of his quite ordinary sermon, and shout "I am the Father Eternal," thumping his chest and reaching towards the rafters. Whereupon, several muscular members of the congregation would pick him up and dump him unceremoniously out on the sidewalk.

Baker thought Morris had something; he befriended him, became his assistant, and later addressed his meetings.

In 1907 Morris announced that he was "born again" and took the name of "Father Jehovia." Baker also was "born again," and became "The Messenger." In 1908, Baker and Morris were joined by a third character, who called himself St. John (De Vine) Hickerson, and the trio worked together for four years, until a theological split caused Hickerson to leave to found the "Church of the Living God" in New York. Hickerson thought that *everyone* was god, not just Father Jehovia. Shortly afterwards "The Messenger" also ditched "Jehovia," and with a party of followers removed to Valdosta, Georgia, where his meetings were so successful at the expense of the "legitimate" churches, and so noisy, that he was arrested as a public menace. The writ which brought him to trial identified him as "J. Doe, alias God." The court found him crazy enough to be kicked out of town, but not crazy enough for a lunatic asylum.

In 1915 the "messenger" arrived in New York and looked up St. John (De Vine) Hickerson, whom he used to invite to meals in order to pick his brains about the practical management of his cult. The Church of the Living God wasn't doing so well. Everyone being God, no one would take any notice of anyone else, not even Hickerson. Fights and stabbings followed, and the

"Church" finally disintegrated. From this, the future "Father" decided that there was only going to be one god in his set up. He severed his connection with Hickerson, and removed to Brooklyn.

About this time, "The Messenger" married one of his converts from Valdosta, whom he called "Peninah," this shortly after he had denounced sex as the blackest of sins, even between husband and wife. He and his bride slept apart in separate dormitories. She was a splendid housekeeper and was useful to him. A year later the group numbering 20 removed to a 12-roomed house in Sayville, Long Island. The names appearing on the deed were Major J. Devine and Peninah his wife. Here Devine operated an employment agency, his followers being let out as domestics. Here also the huge banquets, so popular during the depression years, were started to attract new followers, this with great success.

In 1928 Devine had 90 skilled and unskilled followers all contributing their wages to the upkeep of "God's Dwelling," and in 1930 he made his first white converts, a bus load of them from New Jersey. In the same year George Baker, alias The Messenger, alias Major Devine, became Father Divine.

The meetings continued in the house on Macon Street, to the disgust of the neighbours who, unable to put up with the continual noise, called in the police, and "Father" and 80 of his congregation who were extending their Sunday were arrested at 2 a.m. and hauled off to court in three buses. Most of them pleaded guilty to disturbing the peace and were fined five dollars. Divine pleaded "not guilty" and was sent for trial. Judge Smith sentenced him to 12 months and a 500-dollar fine for disturbing the peace. Four days later the judge died and "Father" spoke from his cell. "I hated to do it" he said. The reaction of his followers to this statement ranged from jubilation to dazed wonder and new converts poured in by the thousand.

"Father" has continued to use this "gimmick" every time one of his enemies has died. In 1938 Eugene Brown, alias The Sufi Abdul Hamid, alias "Snoofy," who said many hard things about "Father," was killed in an air crash. "Father" cashed in. In 1949 Faithful (then faithless) Mary passed on he said "Retribution has come to Faithful Mary . . . she would not live according to my teaching." He has of course conveniently ignored all the rest of his enemies who are alive and kicking. It is only a matter of time.

Faithful Mary first came on the scene in 1933, a human wreck whom Divine took out of the gutter. He made a new woman of her and she rose rapidly in the movement, becoming head of "Faithful Mary Kingdom" with her own cars, chauffeuses, and a luxury flat. Divinites showered her with presents of dresses, furs and furniture, she became almost equal with "God," which "Father" could not tolerate, and so he reduced her to the position

of kitchen maid. This she refused to accept, packed her bags and left. She exposed him in the newspapers, said he ill-treated his wife, blackmailed his rich followers and seduced his "Angels." She started her own movement in opposition, "The Universal Light Movement." No-one joined. Her hotel which catered for "Divinites" folded up after they all walked out, and all her other enterprises failed. She was terrified by stories of retribution ("Look what happened to Snoofy") spread around by "Angels" of Divine who sometimes came to visit her. Finally she recanted in public, after which the movement had no further use for her. She died in obscurity.

In 1946 Father Divine married a second wife, the supposed reincarnation of Peninah (who had since died); Mother Divine in the second body. Since this lady does not have the necessary drive to run the Divine empire, one wonders what will happen when "Father" dies although being God he expects to live for ever. It is quite certain that he believes this since he has given no thought to grooming a successor and there is no-one in the movement capable of taking over. What will happen when he goes? It is generally thought that the movement will fall apart, and there will be mass suicides amongst his followers; that is unless Mother Divine can produce a Father Divine in the second body, which isn't going to be so easy. It will be interesting to see whether Uncle Sam has the last laugh over a little matter of unpaid tax.

[*The Incredible Father Divine*, by Sara Harris, W. H. Allen 1954].

CORRESPONDENCE

MITHRAS

F. A. Ridley's excellent article, "Washed in the Blood of the Bull" has just been brought to my notice. His only mistake lies in imagining that Mithraism was ever *overthrown* by Christianity. As I have shown in my book *Mithras: The Fellow in the Cap* (Rider 15s.), it was not overthrown but *absorbed* by the all too Catholic Church, which contains so many of its ideas and rites that Depuis, in his *Origine des tous les Cultes* could observe, "Christianity is only a sect of the Mithraists."

ESME WYNNE-TYSON.

[Mr. Ridley comments:

While it is perfectly true that Christianity borrowed a great deal from Mithraism (e.g., the date of Christ's birth) it is stated by Bishop Barnes in his book, *The Rise of Christianity* that the charred remains of Mithraic temples destroyed by the Christians have been discovered. This appears to indicate a severe persecution.—ED.]

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

On page 239 Denis Cobell asks "Is The Death Sentence Justifiable?" and on the same page (left-hand column, last para.) G. H. Taylor gives the answer:

"Man himself is drawn into this terrible scheme, in that he has found it necessary to kill some of his fellow creatures, the alternative being that they would kill him."

If Mr. Cobell came face to face with his potential killer, would he still plead for the survival of his poor and much-tormented murderer? Is this perhaps the "Survival of the Fittest," modern version?

Just because I detest murder, I demand the *painless* elimination of murderers.

P. G. ROY.

PERSONAL VIEW

As a writer I have what is perhaps a personal view on the printing dispute, and what particularly worried me was the absence of concern about what is printed. If there were some quality clauses relating to *what*, incorporated in the printers' demands, I would feel that the Unions had taken cultural as well as economic values into consideration. For instance, the small literary review and small publishers who keep experimental work alive are the first to go to the wall under the rising demands of production costs, yet they are of great importance

to the life of the cultural psyche unlike many popular periodicals which can foot the new bills. It seems to me that the Unions have not realised that they are, in fact, saying to authors: "Go and write pulp for the big circulation giants, for the days of limited circulations are numbered."

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

TWO THEORIES

Mr. A. D. Howell Smith (THE FREETHINKER, July 10th) criticises Mr. Cutner's "pet theory" that Hebrew was concocted by mystery-mongering priests. As the priests explained the Hebrew scriptures in Aramaic to the Jews, he says, this would seem to cancel out the mystery-mongering theory. But those same scriptures are still being explained in numerous languages, and Mr. Cutner's idea remains tenable.

On July 17th, Mr. F. A. Ridley argues that if the Druids, as depicted by the Romans, were primitive, their stone age ancestors must surely have been more primitive still. Mr. Ridley, I know, will agree that he could be wrong in this opinion. He is much more aware than I am that priests of all kinds have often turned back the clock. At least he must agree that civilisations have deteriorated and it can never be safe to assume, without evidence, that any system of society has necessarily been consistently progressive. It is interesting in this connection to note that the Tibetans believe the gods built their great monasteries and palaces, as they themselves are incapable of building them today—or maybe I should say *were*, in view of the Chinese invasion.

C. V. SYMES.

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